

it under certain circumstances. It is clearly, however, an issue of the most serious weight. The penalty of death, as Justice Potter Stewart and Justice Sandra Day O'Connor have reminded us, is "qualitatively different" from other punishments we impose. Whether one supports the death penalty or opposes it, there should be no question that the gravity and finality of the penalty demand that we be certain that when it is imposed, it is imposed fairly.

As I have said before, supporters of capital punishment bear a special responsibility to ensure the fairness of this irreversible punishment. Further, Article II of the Constitution vests in the President the sole authority to grant pardons and reprieves for Federal crimes. Therefore, I have approached this matter with great deliberation.

This fall the Department of Justice released the results of a statistical survey of the Federal death penalty. It found that minority defendants and certain geographic districts are disproportionately represented in Federal death penalty prosecutions. As the Deputy Attorney General said at the time the survey was released, no one confronted with those statistics can help but be troubled by those disparities. We do not, however, fully understand what lies behind those statistics. The Attorney General has said that more information and a broader analysis are

needed to better interpret the data we now have and to determine whether the disparities that are evident reflect any bias in our system. She has undertaken an effort to gather and analyze the relevant information so that an appropriate decision can be made on the question of bias.

After a close and careful review of this issue and after conferring with the Attorney General and the Deputy Attorney General, I am not satisfied that, given the uncertainty that exists, it is appropriate to go forward with an execution in a case that may implicate the very issues at the center of that uncertainty.

In issuing this stay, I have not decided that the death penalty should not be imposed in this case, in which heinous crimes were proved. Nor have I decided to halt all executions in the Federal system. I have simply concluded that the examination of possible racial and regional bias should be completed before the United States goes forward with an execution in a case that may implicate the very questions raised by the Justice Department's continuing study. In this area, there is no room for error.

I have asked that the Attorney General report to the President by the end of April, 2001, on the Justice Department's analysis of the racial and geographic disparities in Federal death penalty prosecutions.

Statement on Providing Compensation to America's Nuclear Weapons Workers

December 7, 2000

Today I am pleased to sign an Executive order that will help implement the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Act of 2000, which authorized compensation for thousands of Department of Energy workers who sacrificed their health in building the Nation's nuclear defenses. These individuals, many of whom were neither protected from nor informed of the hazards to which they were exposed, developed occupational illnesses as a result of their exposure to radiation and other hazards unique to nuclear weapons production and testing.

This order builds on the administration's previously articulated principles and the framework

established in the act to ensure the compassionate, fair, and timely compensation of these workers and their families. Specifically, the order defines the respective responsibilities of the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, Energy, and Justice; establishes an Advisory Board on Radiation and Worker Health; and creates an interagency group to develop a legislative proposal and address program implementation issues.

While the Nation can never fully repay these workers or their families, they deserve fair compensation for their sacrifices. I am pleased to take the next critical step in ensuring that these

courageous individuals receive the compensation and recognition they have long deserved.

NOTE: The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, Nebraska December 8, 2000

Thank you very much. Didn't Casey do a good job? [Applause] She was great. I'd like to thank Chancellor Johnston for her kind remarks and the honorary degree. And thank you, President Smith, and members of the board of trustees, to both the students and the other members.

Thank you, Governor, for your welcome. And I thank the other State officials who are here. I am especially grateful that my long-time friend and former colleague as Governor, your retiring Senator, Bob Kerrey, flew down here with me today. Thank you, Bob, for your service, along with our former Nebraska Congressman, Peter Hoagland. Thank you for coming with me. I congratulate Ben Nelson on his election to the United States Senate. Governor Morrison, thank you for being here today.

And I want to say a special word of thanks to my great friend, your former Senator, Jim Exon, who persuaded me to come here and to come to Kearney. He said—[inaudible]—should be here.

When I came in here and I looked at this crowd, one of my staff members joked that we had found a building in Nebraska that would hold every single Democrat—[laughter]—and a few charitable Republicans, to boot. [Laughter]

Let me say, I'm glad that I finally made it to Nebraska. There were a lot of signs outside that said, "You saved the best till last." [Laughter] And I saw the patriotism and the spirit of the people, all the children holding the American flags. It was very, very moving, coming in. All the schools were let out, and there were hundreds and hundreds of people along the way. And it made us a little bit late, and for that, I'm sorry. But I did actually stop, and we got out and shook hands with one group of school-children there just to thank them for being in the cold. So I thank them for that.

I was also reminded at the airport that we are literally in the heartland of America. A gentleman at the airport gave me a sweatshirt that

had a little map of Nebraska with Kearney, and it had a line and it said, "1,300 miles to New York and 1,300 miles to San Francisco."

Most Americans have probably forgotten this, but back in the 1870's, there was actually talk of relocating our Nation's Capital away from Washington, DC, to a more central location. And a local publisher in this community, named Moses Henry Sydenham, launched a national campaign to nominate Kearney for the Nation's Capital. He promised to rename it "New Washington" and to use the real estate profits to pay off the national debt. [Laughter]

Critics of his proposal asked him what in the world he would do with all those big, fancy buildings in old Washington. He said it was simple. He would turn them into asylums. [Laughter] Well, history took a different course, except for that part about turning those buildings into asylums. [Laughter] I have occupied one for the last 8 years.

And we are finally paying off the national debt, which is good. [Applause] Thank you. But since half of Washington is in Kearney today, maybe we should think again about moving the Capital. I rather like it here. [Laughter]

I want to say again, I thank the people of this community for a wonderful welcome, and all of you in the university community, especially. I also want to say again how impressed I was by what Casey had to say. Because I came here today not just to keep my promise to visit Nebraska but to keep working on something at the very end of my term I have been trying for 8 years to do, which is to persuade ordinary, hard-working American citizens in the heartland of America that you should be concerned about what goes on beyond our Nation's borders and what our role in the rest of the world is, because the world is growing smaller and smaller and more interdependent. Every Nebraska farmer knows that. And indeed, when Senator Kerrey and I visited the units of the Nebraska Air National Guard out there, we